So far telephone facility has been provided in 900 villages including some Gram Sabhas. Remaining villages will be covered progressively by March, 2002.

Telephone Exchanges with STD facility in Gujarat

†3852. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Taluka or Tehsil Headquarters having telephone exchanges with STD facility in Gujarat till the year 1999;

(b) the number of Talukas in the State where this facility is not yet available and the details in this regard; and

(c) by when the STD facility is likely to be provided in such Taluka headquarters ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) Out of 223 Taluka Headquarters in Gujarat 219 Taluka Headquarters were having Telephone Exchanges with STD facility till the year 1999.

(b) and (c) As on 31-3-2000 there are 226 Taluka Headquarters out of which 225 are having STD facility. Remaining one *i. e.* Kaparada Taluka, is not having any Telephone exchange. It has been planned to install telephone exchange with STD facility there during this year.

Charging of high rents for telephones

3853. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are charging high rents for telephones;

(b) whether it is also a fact that efficiencies of technology are not being passed on to the telephone subscriber;

(c) whether any effort is being made to reduce costs of operation in the telecom system;

(d) if so, what innovative measures have been taken to reduce costs of operation in the telecom sector; and

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.